



Competitive funding to strengthen
university research profiles (PROFI)

PROFI 5 CALL

20 Sep–15 Nov 2018



ACADEMY OF FINLAND

The Academy of Finland funds cutting-edge, responsible and high-impact research and promotes the renewal and regeneration of science. We are Finland's leading expert organisation in science and science policy. Our funding is based on open competition and independent peer review.

We promote the internationality of research and good scientific practice. We require that the researchers and sites of research we fund follow the research-ethical guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity.

In 2018, our funding for research amounts to 444 million euros. Part of our funds (€70.7m in 2018) come from proceeds of Finland's national gaming company Veikkaus.

Read more about us on www.aka.fi/en.



COMPETITIVE FUNDING TO STRENGTHEN UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PROFILES (PROFI)

November 2018 call text (PROFI 5)

Applications are invited between 20 September and 15 November 2018.

The funding to be distributed through this call depends on the Finnish Parliament's decision to allocate the necessary funds to the Academy of Finland in its budget for 2019.

Aim

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support and speed up the strategic profiling of Finnish universities to improve the quality of research. The funding is intended for actions that strengthen the research areas selected by the universities based on their strategies. In the 2018 call (known as PROFI 5), particular attention will be paid to the strategic distribution of work and the collaboration between universities as well as to the deselections made in connection with increased profiling. The funding is open to all scientific, scholarly and artistic disciplines.

Another aim is to contribute to intensifying strategic cooperation between Finnish universities and with universities of applied sciences, research institutes, hospital districts and other relevant actors, and to clarifying the responsibilities between these actors. The regional and thematic competitive clusters formed via such collaboration and distribution of work may also include actors from the private and nonprofit sectors.

Key concepts

A 'profiling area' is a research area that a university aims to develop based on its strategy. It is a select area of a university's total spectrum of research activities.

Profiling areas can be:

- existing high-quality areas
- emerging areas with potential to reach the top level
- new areas with high potential.

A 'profiling measure' is an action that a university aims to carry out to advance a chosen profiling area. Universities may start several measures to advance the same area in different years.

Profiling measures may target the following types of profiling areas:

- a profiling area that is related to an area funded in the first, second, third and/or fourth PROFI call but that will be advanced with a new measure
- a profiling area that did not receive funding in the first, second, third and/or fourth PROFI call
- a new profiling area.

Applicant and funding

Funding will be granted for a fixed term. The funding is applied for by universities, each university with its own application. Consortium applications will not be accepted.



To promote strategic cooperation and distribution of work between universities, the Academy's online services now allow universities to authorise each other to view their draft applications. Each university may decide on the authorisation at its own discretion. The authorisation feature can also be used to support universities internally; a university may, for example, authorise specific staff members to access the application's budget section. In other words, there are two types of authorisation: read-only and edit. Read-only authorisation may be issued to any number of people at the same time. The authorisation is valid for a fixed period.

If the chosen profiling area includes strategic distribution of work and/or collaboration between universities, each university must describe its own contribution in the action plan to be appended to the application, even if the university will not be applying for PROFI 5 funding for the area concerned.

The PROFI 5 call has a total budget of 50 million euros, which will be granted for measures supporting the research-related profiling of Finnish universities.

The call is implemented following the full cost model. The Academy of Finland's funding contribution comes to 100 per cent, covering the costs in full. The universities will not be required to contribute to the Academy's funding.

Discretionary government transfers cannot overlap. The funding of an initiated profiling measure may, however, be continued with another PROFI funding decision. For example, a person may be paid salary under different PROFI funding decisions or from the university's core funding to carry out teaching. However, the salary cannot be paid at the same time (overlapping salary).

Costs related to research infrastructures will be funded only if the infrastructure concerned is a 'local infrastructure' primarily operated by the university itself. The key instrument with which the Academy of Finland funds national and international research infrastructures is the funding provided by the Finnish Research Infrastructure Committee. The Academy will not grant overlapping funding for research infrastructures.

The funding is granted to support the profiling measures specified in the action plan included in the application. The Academy will not make advance payments on the funding.

Please see [General conditions and guidelines for funding on our website for all up-to-date conditions and guidelines regarding the funding.](#)

How applications are reviewed

The applications will be reviewed by an international panel of experts. University management representatives will have an opportunity to discuss with the chair of the panel on 15–16 January 2019. University management will be called in to be interviewed by the panel on 13–14 February 2019.

A particular focus in the review of action plans will be on the plan's level of ambition, feasibility and clarity. The review form to be used by the panel is available on our website at [Guides for reviewers](#). Applicants would do well to familiarise themselves with the review questions. In addition to a final rating, the reviewers will give a separate rating for the strategic distribution of work between and the collaboration in the universities' profiling areas. The review panel will also rank the applications.

Funding period

The funding period will start on 1 April 2019 at the earliest and end no later than 31 August 2023.



Follow-up and reporting

The Academy will make one funding decision per each application, and universities will be required to report on each decision. The Academy's [general conditions and guidelines for funding oblige the universities to report on the use of funds and on the progress of the profiling measures](#).

The Academy will provide the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture with reports on the use of funding.

About the application

The application consists of an application drafted in the Academy's online services and an action plan. The action plan must be drafted following the Academy's guidelines.

The cost estimate to be filled in in the online services should include only funding to be applied for from the Academy, specified by type of expenditure. Applicant universities must draft their cost estimates following the annual instalments of the state budget (10% in 2019, 10% in 2020, 20% in 2021, 40% in 2020 and 20% in 2023).

Action plan

The action plan and its appendices must be no more than 30 pages long and written in English. Make sure not to exceed the maximum length indicated.

In addition to the applications, the Academy will provide the review panel with university key figures from 2017 (source: Vipunen), a bibliometric analysis of the universities' publication activities in the 2000s, together with descriptions of the 2010 university reform, the Finnish research system and the Finnish university funding model. The panel will also be given a summary report on the state of scientific research in Finland, a copy of Finland's Strategy and Roadmap for Research Infrastructures and university-specific funding decisions on research infrastructures since 2013.

The action plan must be drafted according to the guidelines below. Tables 1–2 must be completed using the templates provided.

1. General description of university

- Brief description of the focus areas of the university's strategy
- Table 1: summary of the university's strategic profiling areas and an estimate of their funding in 2015–2023

2. Description of each profiling area for which funding will be applied, following the structure below

Name of profiling area

- On what grounds has the area been selected as a strategic profiling area and how is it linked to the university's strategy?
- How is the area associated with the university's other profiling areas?
- What is the added value of the research in the chosen profiling area in comparison to research at other Finnish units?
- How will actions related to open science in the chosen area support profiling and strengthen the quality of research?



International level of research in the profiling area

- What is the current level of the profiling area?
 - description of measures taken since 2015 to raise the level of research that have had a substantial impact on the current level of research in the profiling area
 - short description of key research topics in the profiling area
 - “top 5” of publications authored or co-authored by the university’s researchers from the profiling area
 - list of current PIs (name, title/position, department, field)
 - expertise of key personnel in the profiling area
 - research environment
- Aspired level
 - What is the international level sought after?
 - Compared to the premise, how significant will the change be?
 - schedule in which the university intends to reach the aspired level
- Measures to reach the aspired level
 - personnel, incentives, research environment, leadership
 - description of the profiling measures for which funding is sought

Universities are encouraged to include in their action plans measures to support at-risk researchers.

- How will the university ensure a sufficient level of science renewal?

A short description of how the university will monitor the increase in research quality as well as the progress and impact of the profiling measures; description of key performance indicators; description of the implementation risks and risk management

Resources

- Table 2: estimate of personnel resources in the profiling area in 2015–2018 and for the PROFI 5 funding period 2019–2023 (FTEs)
- Estimate of long-term cost effects (€ million) How will the costs be covered after the profiling funding has ended?

Strategic distribution of work and collaboration between the universities in the profiling area for which funding is sought (NB! This will be given a separate rating in the review).

- Description of strategic distribution of work and collaboration in the profiling area for which the applicant university, or the university with which the applicant university intends to develop and intensify distribution of work and collaboration, is applying for funding. Depending on the situation at the applicant university, the university will provide a description according to item A (see below) and, if necessary, to item B to clarify how the distribution of work and collaboration are linked to the universities’ strategies and to show how they support the profiling. The description should be no more than one page per profiling area of the applicant university.
 - A) Description of the universities’ distribution of work and collaboration in the profiling area for which the applicant university is applying for PROFI funding and where



one or several other universities are applying for PROFi funding in related profiling areas

- B) Description of the universities' distribution of work and collaboration in the profiling area for which the applicant university is applying for PROFi funding but where no other university is applying for PROFi funding in related profiling areas

Well-motivated description of strategic distribution of work and collaboration with other relevant actors

- Distribution of work and collaboration within the profiling area with Finnish universities of applied sciences, research institutes, hospital districts and other actors
 - Significance of the university's strategic selections and deselections for competence-based growth and other needs in society
 - Cooperation with and dissemination of information to business and industry and society at large
3. Description of the universities' strategic distribution of work and collaboration in the profiling areas for which the applicant university is not applying for PROFi funding but where one or several other universities are applying for PROFi funding in related profiling areas

How applications are submitted and become pending, how decisions are made

Competent representatives of the applicant universities will submit the funding applications using the Academy of Finland's online services. In the online services, the representatives will also issue a commitment on behalf of the site of research. Applications can be submitted as of 20 September 2018. The call closes on 15 November 2018 at 16.15 local Finnish time.

A subcommittee appointed by the Board of the Academy of Finland will make the funding decisions in May 2019.

When preparing and making the funding decisions, the subcommittee will consider the overall scores given by the review panel as well as the scores for the distribution of work and the collaboration. The subcommittee will also consider the ranking done by the panel. In addition, the subcommittee will consider the relationship between the funding applied for, the planned profiling measures and the universities research funding as a whole. It will also take into account the universities' interim reports on previously funded profiling measures.

Contacts

- Riitta Maijala, Vice President for Research, tel. +358 295 335 002
- Anne Heinänen, Counsellor of Science, tel. +358 295 335 021
- Helena Vänskä, Science Adviser, tel. +358 295 335 036
- Outi Ala-Honkola, Science Adviser, tel. +358 295 335 029
- Sirpa Nummila, Finance Manager, tel. +358 295 335 081 (financial issues)

Email addresses: firstname.lastname@aka.fi